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TELEGRAM

June 21, 2004

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Subject: UAE - REACTIONS TO TIP REPORT
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CONFIDENTIAL ABU DHABI 02034

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CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 01 OF 02 ABU DHABI 002034

SIPDIS

STATE FOR G/TIP, INL, DRL, NEA/RA AND NEA/ARP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/20/2009
TAGS: PHUM KCRM PREF TC
SUBJECT: UAE - REACTIONS TO TIP REPORT

Ref: (A) State 123433, (B) Abu Dhabi 1832

Classified by Richard A. Albright, Charge d'Affaires,
a.i., reasons 1. 5 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: UAE Government officials have responded relatively positively to the annual Trafficking in Persons report despite the fact that the UAE was dropped from Tier 1 to Tier 2. The prevailing sentiment has been that the demotion - a year after the UAE's unprecedented jump from Tier 3 to Tier 1 - will encourage government authorities to tackle the trafficking problem more energetically and persuade international monitors, including the USG, to raise the UAE to Tier 1 again. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Post delivered reftel country narrative and

talking points, as well as the TIP report's "International Best Practices" chapter highlighting the UAE's model efforts to eliminate the problem of underage child camel jockeys, to senior UAEG contacts on June 13. Recipients at the federal level included Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Shaykh Hamdan bin Zayed, Information and Culture Ministry Shaykh Abdullah bin Zayed, Interior Ministry Under Secretary Shaykh Saif bin Zayed, and Foreign Ministry Under Secretary Abdullah Rashid Al-Nuaimi. In Dubai, the Consul General delivered the report to Dr. Khalifa Saeed, Chief of the Dubai Ruler's Court, and to Brig. General Dhahi Khalfan, Dubai Police Commander.

¶13. (C) Shaykh Abdullah asked the Ambassador before her departure from post what she thought the UAE could do to earn Tier 1 status again. The Ambassador said that it was important for the authorities to distinguish trafficking victims from people arrested for immigration violations or prostitution-related offenses, to establish safe houses for women, and provide the USG with more data on what it is doing to battle the trafficking problem. The Ambassador also encouraged the UAEG to allow the IOM to open an office in the UAE. Shaykh Abdullah noted that many deported prostitutes turn around and come back to the UAE. He wanted to know if the U.S. would criticize the UAE for putting long-term bans on deported prostitutes. The Ambassador said the U.S. would not criticize the UAE for deporting and barring the re-entry of persons who had violated UAE laws.

¶14. (C) After some initial grumbling about "interference in our internal affairs," Brig. Gen. Dhahi Khalfan told the Consul General in Dubai that he agreed that it would be a good idea for his staff to study the report carefully and come up with a plan for addressing some of the problems raised. "What we don't want is for you to tell us what we need to do. Let us come up with a plan," he suggested. He said the police had recently begun working closely with the consulates (in Dubai) of countries that were major sources of trafficked persons. He urged that the U.S. share any information it had regarding prostitutes who were being trafficked to Dubai against their will. In his opinion, nearly all of the prostitutes working in Dubai had come voluntarily. The Consul General explained that the U.S. definition of trafficking includes women who might have come to the UAE willingly but are now being coerced into staying, including by having their passports withheld. Khalfan made it clear that he did agree with that broader definition of trafficking. "They can go to their consulate and get a new passport any time they want," he said. However, he did not push back when the Consul General noted that in many cases the women were too fearful and/or otherwise unable to go to their consulates.

¶15. (U) Additionally, we shared the TIP reports with Issam Azouri, the Embassy's principal contact in the Shaykh Saif's office; Dr. Lt. Col. Abdullah bin Sahoo, director of the Abu Dhabi Police Officers' Training Institute; Dr. Lt. Col. Mohamed Al-Mur, director of the Dubai Police Human Rights Care Department; and Noura Al-Suweidi, executive director of the General Women's Union.

¶16. (C) Issam Azouri of the Interior Ministry's Office of the Under Secretary, reacted favorably to the new report. "This helps us," he told Polchief. "We're taking this as an incentive." Azouri also was pleased that the USG recognized the UAE's efforts to combat trafficking in child camel jockeys by highlighting the UAE in the "International Best Practices" chapter. He said the Interior Ministry now has a special committee charged with reviewing anti-TIP laws, a member of

which took part in an USG-sponsored anti-trafficking training program. "We hope to have TIP legislation in place this year," Azouri said. "Each year, we will hope to make some more progress." The UAE is not interested in propaganda but in "having a benchmark to audit what we do," he said, referring to the TIP report. Polchief said further publicity about the UAE's anti-TIP efforts would help as well. Azouri agreed and said he was aware that the local press was about to publish one or more articles on TIP soon.

(Note: There has been no mention of the new TIP report in the UAE to date. End note.)

¶7. (C) Noura Al-Suweidi, the executive director of the General Women's Union, told Polchief on June 21 that she and her organization would be very interested in taking a more active role in addressing the trafficking in women problem in the UAE. Al-Suweidi said she looked forward to reading and commenting on the TIP report that post provided her. She said she was aware of the progress that her government had made on the camel jockeys issue, and showed intense interest and took extensive notes when Polchief described the problem of trafficked women.

Comment:

¶8. (C) The lack of any strongly negative reaction to this year's TIP report is encouraging, particularly when we hear senior UAEG interlocutors say that the drop from Tier 2 to Tier 1 only strengthens their resolve to continue battling against the trafficking problem. The anti-TIP symposium the Abu Dhabi Police Officers Training Institute conducted for 80 officers May 24-25 (see ref B) is already one step in the right direction, and we understand from Lt. Col. Sahoo that the police officers training institute has begun planning for a November conference on human rights and TIP issues. It is also encouraging to hear the General Women's Union take an interest in the issue of trafficking in women, as this is not an area that they had focused on before. We will be working to engage them further.

ALBRIGHT